

CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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Cones Return to Davis to Conserve Future Generations of Forests Nursery Processing Over Five Thousand Bushels for Resource Conservation

Sacramento -- Like the swallows that return to Capistrano every year, the cones have come to Davis. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) is currently processing seed cones to supplement their inventory of native tree seed to grow replacement trees for areas devastated by disease, drought, fire, or other reforestation projects statewide. CDF is mandated by the Public Resources Code to annually survey, collect, and have adequate supplies of native conifer tree seed in order to maintain a statewide inventory of regionally appropriate tree seedlings.

Cones were harvested this summer in the mountain forests of San Bernardino, Riverside, and San Diego counties. CDF targeted 1,400 bushels of cones for collection within the forested areas of Southern California. Additional cones were collected from seed orchards and forest stands in several areas in northern and central California. Additionally, several industrial forest landowners contract with CDF to process and store their seed in the State Seed Bank. Conifer trees have naturally occurring cycles of cone production but are not necessarily annual. Some species normally will yield cone seeds every three to six years, others less frequently than that. It has been nearly 25 years since the last coast redwood seed crop. It is important to track these events and to move rapidly to collect the cone seeds when the opportunity arises. Collection teams have completed their work for this season except for gray pine and coulter pine which will be collected during the late winter 2006.

CDF staff at the Louis A. Moran Reforestation Center in Davis, CA have completed seed extraction operations and are currently working on de-winging and cleaning the seed and sorting the viable from the non-viable seed in preparation for storage in the State Seed Bank. These operations will be ongoing for the next three to four months.

Over the last five years thousands of acres of conifer trees were destroyed by a combination of bark beetle infestation exacerbated by several years of drought and topped off by devastating wildfires in 2003. The need for increased seed collection is very important, to deal with the tree loss. Another reason for seed collection is the apparent ability of the Sugar pine in Southern California to avoid the "Blister Rust" disease that has destroyed thousand of acres of Sugar pine trees in other regions of the state. The Sugar pine is currently going through a heavy cyclic cone crop this year that has not been seen in many years. Researchers are very interested in examining the Southern California Sugar pine seeds to see if they possess some type of natural genetic resistance to the "Blister Rust" pathogen.

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